A Man on a Mission

*The story of a man’s strive to unite his people*

success was recognized by many including William Harrison, general of Indiana, who said that Tecumseh was forming “an Empire that would rival in glory that of the Aztecs and the Incas.”

In 1808 the Shawnee established a new capital along the Wabash and Tippecanoe rivers located in present day Indiana. This town was named Prophetstown, and was open to any and all. The town’s form of government was a **theocracy**. The people listened to the word of Tenskwatawa (the prophet) and he along with Tecumseh made the decisions for the whole town. “Brothers we must be united; we must smoke the same pipe; we must fight each other’s battles; and more than all, we must love the Great Spirit. He is for us. He will destroy our enemies and make all his red children happy.” Tecumseh was a brilliant **rhetorician**, these were just a few of the inspiring words he would speak to his people to motivate them to unite and fight the Americans to keep what’s rightly fully theirs.

On November 7, 1811 William Harrison, having realized Tecumseh was in Alabama, marched an arm of 900 men into Prophetstown. Tenskwatawa told his people that their faith would protect them from the white men, but when it did not the results were catastrophic. Tecumseh returned to Prophetstown two months after the attack and saw the results of The Battle of Tippecanoe. Prophetstown had burned to the ground, and abandoned.

Tecumseh was born on March 9, 1768 in the Shawnee village of Piqua, Ohio. The name Tecumseh means shooting star because a comet shot across the sky before he was born. The Shawnee people saw it as an omen of good luck, and believed the child would achieve great things. The assumptions were spot on.

Tecumseh became a great warrior and was highly respected amongst his people. Eventually he earned the rank of **Governor** and became the one to lead his people. Tenskwatawa, meaning “the prophet”, was Tecumseh’s little brother. Tenskwatawa was also highly respected amongst his people. Tenskwatawa aided his brother in his attempt to convince his people to give up the white man’s ways and join together to fight against them. Tenskwatawa’s vision was to return to Traditional Indian customs.

In 1805 Tecumseh and his brother began their journey all over North America from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico with the vision of creating a pan-Indian union. By this time Americans were beginning to get very greedy. They were offering money to some of the Indians in exchange for land. Tecumseh preached to his people never to accept these offers as tempting as they may be because giving into the Americans was the worst thing could do in this time of distress.

American officials began to get worried because Tecumseh was achieving much success in his attempt to unite his people. His actions were **revolutionary** for the Indians because no one until this point had stepped up like Tecumseh and attempted something so big. His

The defeat of the Indians at Prophetstown was a huge blow to Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, and his people not only because of the lives they lost, but because of trust they lost. Now the Indians no longer trusted Tenskwatawa as their prophet, which also led to some distrust in Tecumseh. This lowered the spirits of the Indians and decreased the number of people who would follow Tecumseh. Even with these circumstances Tecumseh pushed on and didn’t give up his dream of a pan-Indian union.

In 1812 The War of 1812 broke out between The United States and Britain. Realizing Britain’s strength, Tecumseh journeyed to Canada to negotiate an alliance with the British forces. He formed an alliance with British General Isaac Brock. Tecumseh was placed in command of all Indian forces. If this new alliance was able to defeat the Americans the British promised to let the Indians keep their land under British protection.

Together the British and Indians had many victories until they finally had their first set back in 1813 at the battle of Fort Meigs. From then on the alliance began to lose more and more battles and with each battle there was more hesitation from the British side to go to battle with the American forces. A point came when Tecumseh couldn’t take anymore of the British cowardliness so he decided to go into battle regardless if he had British support or not. On October 5, 1813 General Henry Proctor decided to join Tecumseh in battle and they fought side by side in the battle of Thames River. They were outnumbered three to one, and on that same day Tecumseh would fight for the last time.

Just seven years after Tecumseh’s death Indians were being relocated, and their numbers were decreasing. This just shows how big of an impact Tecumseh had on the fate of Native American’s in North America. He was by far the most important **visionary** of the 1800’s because even though the odds were against him he was able to achieve his goal of a pan-Indian union. Today we look back at the Indians as brave men and women who fought hard for what was rightfully theirs.

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